TREASURES INTO TRACTORS
A Symposium on the Selling of Russia’s Cultural Heritage, 1918-1938

Saturday, November 6, 2010 10:00am—2:00pm
Room 1501 International Affairs Building, 420 West 118th Street, New York, NY

Unlike the widely publicized controversy surrounding Soviet and Nazi looting of art during World War II and its restitution, Soviet sales of masterpieces and other valuables during the interwar period have remained largely ignored outside a small community of scholars. Yet the Soviet government’s voluntary sales of Russian cultural heritage had far-reaching consequences for the international art market and perceptions of Russian art abroad. This symposium sheds new light on the artistic, legal, and economic impact of the interwar Soviet art sales, particularly as they affected the formation of museum and library collections in the United States. The symposium will conclude with a response by Mikhail B. Piotrovsky, Director of the Hermitage Museum.

Morning Session, 10:00am –12:00pm

Welcome
Peter Schaffer, President of the Hermitage Museum Foundation

Introductory Remarks
Mikhail B. Piotrovsky, Director, Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

Treasures into Tractors: An Introduction
Wendy Salmond, Professor of Art History, Chapman University, Orange CA

Collecting Art in Tumultuous Times: A Lesson from the Russian Art Market 1918-1938
Anne Odom, Curator Emerita, Hillwood Estate, Museum, and Gardens, Washington DC

The twentieth century has been a tumultuous time in the art markets of Europe. The Russian sales of the 1920s and 30s were only the first installment. A look at the court cases of these years and the reasons judges gave for deciding against the members of the Russian aristocracy who were suing for restitution can help us understand that the political circumstances surrounding the Russian sales were unique. Much of their art ended up in the United States, often neglected and not fully understood. What then are some of the responsibilities and opportunities of institutions like Hillwood Museum or the New York Public Library with large holdings as a result of these sales?

"When Only the Best Will Do:" Furniture by David Roentgen & Other Decorative Arts in the Auctioneer's Limelight
Wolfram Koeppe, Curator, Department of European Sculpture & Decorative Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The museums and palaces of St. Petersburg today boast an important assemblage of furniture by David Roentgen (1743-1897) that provide a tantalizing glimpse of the abundance of such objects in Russia before 1917. Roentgen’s furniture was of great cultural significance in the context of imperial Russia. In the 20th century, however, key examples of furniture and decorative arts by Roentgen and his contemporaries with a Russian imperial provenance have ended up in the museums and private collections of Western Europe. Dozens of pieces by the Roentgen workshops and thousands of objects of decorative art from Imperial Russia still await discovery.

From the Front Lines of the Russian Art Market: Recent Discoveries and Findings
Yelena Harbick, Director, Russian Fine and Decorative Arts, Bonham’s, New York
The rapid economic, social, and cultural changes that took place in Russia over the last decade ignited unparalleled interest in Russian art. Art treasures previously perceived as “forever lost” to Russian culture, as a result of the art sales following the October Revolution, have been particularly sought after by new Russian collectors. An unprecedented demand for Russian art drove art dealers, international auction houses and art advisors to search for lost Russian treasures buried in Western bank vaults, stored in institutional collections and often forgotten on family estates. Tracing the fate of those pieces and re-introducing them to international collectors is an ongoing challenge and an exciting adventure.

Lunch Break, 12:00pm—1:10pm

Afternoon Session, 1:10pm—2:00pm

Russia’s Art Under Armand’s “Hammer”
Edward Kasinec, Research Scholar, Harriman Institute, Columbia University and Staff Advisor, Education, Programming and Exhibitions Office, New York Public Library

The three Hammer brothers—Armand, Victor, and Harry—had extraordinary and always controversial careers in the New York art and antiquities scene of the 1930s. Based on newly digitized newspaper sources, this presentation touches on their collecting activities in Soviet Russia during the 1920s and subsequent marketing ventures in America in the ensuing decade. Through Hammer Galleries, and strategic alliances with major department stores in New York City and in other American cities, they did much to inculcate a taste (and market) for things Russian sacred and decorative art among American clients, a legacy that endures to the present day.

From Dark Mirror to Broad Daylight: Reflections on Soviet Book Sales During the 1920s and 30s
Robert H. Davis, Jr., Librarian for Russian, Eurasian & East European Studies, Columbia University Libraries and Librarian for Slavic & East European Studies, Cornell University

The presentation provides a brief overview of the actors and institutions involved in the sale and marketing of nationalized books and manuscripts during the 1920s and 30s; more specifically, of materials with an imperial provenance.

Conclusion
Peter Schaffer, President of the Hermitage Museum Foundation
Participants

Robert H. Davis, Jr. is Librarian for Russian, Eurasian and East European Collections at Columbia University and Slavic & East European Studies Librarian at Cornell University. He holds graduate degrees from Columbia University and the City University of New York. Author of four books, and more than sixty articles, reviews, and communications, Davis has presented referred conference papers at numerous regional, national, and international meetings. He has also authored, coauthored, and/or managed a total of ten preservation and access grants funded by various federal and private entities, including the NEH and the Department of Education. He was a co-curator of the exhibition Russia Engages the World, 1453-1825 at The New York Public Library in 2003-2004, and a co-editor and contributor to its companion volume, published by Harvard University Press.

Yelena Harbick is Director for Russian Fine and Decorative Arts in New York for the British international auction house Bonhams. She holds a Master Degree from Moscow State University, followed by graduate work in the Department of Art and Archaeology at the University of Maryland. Her professional career includes positions as Senior Specialist in Russian paintings at Christie’s and Assistant Curator for Russian Art at Hillwood Museum, Estate and Gardens in Washington, DC. In her capacity as a museum curator she researched and extensively lectured on the subjects of Russian paintings and decorative arts, Fabergé, the history of Russian dining, and Russian culture. For the past six years she has been instrumental in organizing sales of Russian art for two international auction houses, advising Russian private and institutional collectors on acquiring Russian paintings, Fabergé objects, and Russian porcelain.

Edward Kasinec holds graduate degrees from Columbia University (M.A., 1968, M.Phil.,1979), and Simmons College (M.L.S., 1976), as well as a Certificate in Archival Studies from American University (1971) and a Certificate in Appraisal Studies (Fine and Decorative Arts, [2010]) from New York University. He is the principal of REE&E, LLC, a fine arts and book appraisal service specializing in Russia, Eastern Europe and Eurasia. His professional career includes service as Reference Librarian/Archivist for the Harvard University Library and the Ukrainian Research Institute Library (1973-80); Librarian for Slavic Collections, University of California, Berkeley, Library (1980-84); and Curator, Slavic and Baltic Division, The New York Public Library (1984-2009). He presently holds appointment as a Research Scholar, Harriman Institute, Columbia University, and also serves as an Advisor to the Education, Programming and Exhibitions Department, The New York Public Library. Kasinec has published more than two hundred refereed articles and books. He has been acknowledged in as many academic publications, and has lectured on issues of bibliography and librarianship throughout the world, including at Sapporo University, Hebrew University, and many North American and Eastern European institutions. He has organized numerous symposia and conferences, and serves on a number of editorial and advisory committees in the disciplines of area studies. Kasinec is the author of twelve successful grant proposals to the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Wolfram Koeppke studied at the Universities of Giessen and Munich and received a PhD in 1989. He has been working in the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York for fifteen years, since 2004 as Curator. He is the author and co-author of publications and catalogues on European furniture, goldsmithing, the history of ornament, and sculpture, including Ori e argenti dei Santi and Die Lemmers-Danforth-Sammlung Wetzlar (1992); Princely Splendor. The Dresden Court 1580-1620 (2004); European Furniture in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (2006); and Fascino del bello. Collezione Terruzzi (2007). Among the exhibitions he has curated are: “Celebrating Saint Petersburg” (2003-4); “Princely Splendor. The Dresden Court 1580-1620” (2005); “Art of the Royal Court. Treasures in Pietre Dure from the Palaces of Europe,” (2008); and “Vienna Circa 1780. An Imperial Silver Service Rediscovered” (2010). A specialist on the furniture of Abraham and David Roentgen, he co-organized the Roentgen exhibition Edle Möbel für höchste Kreise (2007) and is preparing "Seductive Luxury and Innovation: Furniture by Abraham and David Roentgen" (2012-13)

Anne Odom is Curator Emerita at Hillwood, Estate, Museum & Gardens in Washington, DC. She is co-editor, with Wendy Salmond, of the Hillwood publication, Treasure into Tractors (2009). Her most recent book, Russian Silver in America: Surviving the Melting Pot, will appear in February 2011. Together Liana Paredes she wrote A Taste
for Splendor: Russian Imperial Treasures from the Hillwood Museum (1996) and she and Paredes were curators of a traveling exhibition of the same name. She was guest curator of the exhibitions Russian Enamels: From Kievan Rus to Fabergé (The Walters Gallery, 1996) and What Became of Peter’s Dream: Court Cultural in the Reign of Nicholas II for (Middlebury College Museum of Art, 19), and the author of catalogues for both. She has also published on Russian Imperial Porcelain and Fabergé. She was formerly Deputy Director of Collections at Hillwood and Chief Curator before she went into semi-retirement in 2002.

Mikhail B. Piotrovsky has served as the Director of the State Hermitage Museum since 1992. He is the son of Boris Borisovich Piotrovsky, the director of the Museum from 1964 to 1990. Mr. Piotrovsky graduated with honors from the Oriental Faculty of Leningrad State University, specializing in Arabic Studies in 1967, and also attended Cairo University from 1965 to 1966. He worked and did further studies at the Leningrad branch of the Institute for Oriental Studies from 1967 until 1991 before joining the Hermitage staff. In his various capacities, Mr. Piotrovsky has taken part in archeological excavations in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Yemen. He has authored more than 200 scholarly works, and is a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Russian Academy of Arts. He has been honored by numerous governments and is a professor at St. Petersburg State University, Chairman of Museums in Russia, Chairman of the Board of the European University in St. Petersburg and editor-in-chief of The Christian Orient. In 2003, he was awarded the President Prize in the Field of Art and Literature, and in 1997 the International Astronomical Union named a small planet “Piotrovsky” to honor Boris and Mikhail Piotrovsky and their contributions to the arts and sciences. In October, 2009 Dr. Piotrovsky was honored with the prestigious Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service at the Kathryn and Shelby Cullum Davis Awards Dinner in Washington DC.

Wendy Salmond is Professor of Art History at Chapman University in Orange, CA. She is co-editor, with Anne Odom, of Treasure into Tractors (2009). She has written and lectured on the Russian arts and crafts movement (Arts and Crafts in Late Imperial Russia, 1996), icons, and the reception of Art Nouveau in Russia. She was guest curator of the exhibitions “Tradition in Transition: Russian Icons in the Age of the Romanovs” at Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens (2004) and “Russia Imagined, 1825-1925: The Art and Impact of Fedor Solntsev” at The New York Public Library (2007). Her current project is a book tracing transformations in the perception and function of icons in Russia ca. 1830-1940, from objects of devotion to works of art.

Peter L. Schaffer is co-owner and a fourth generation member of the multi-generational family firm, A La Vieille Russie, founded in Kiev in 1851. He has worked for over fifty years in the art and antiques business. He has lectured extensively, been active as a board member/officer of numerous organizations, and is a vettor for major American and European antiques fairs. He currently serves as President of the Hermitage Museum Foundation.

Places to Eat

- **Hamilton Deli**
  Delis, Sandwiches
  1129 Amsterdam Ave, New York 10025
  (Btw 115th & 116th St)
  (212) 749-8924

- **Che’ Bella Pizza**
  Pizza, Italian
  1215 Amsterdam Ave, New York 10027
  (Btw 119th & 120th St)
  (212) 864-7300

- **Apple Tree Supermarket**
  Delis, Sandwiches
  1225 Amsterdam Ave, New York, NY
  (Btw 120th & 121st St)
  (212) 865-884

- **Camille’s**
  American (Traditional)- restaurant and take out
  1135 Amsterdam Ave, New York 10025
  (Btw 115th & 116th St)
  (212) 749-2428

- **Subconscious**
  Sandwiches, Cheese steaks, Soups
  1213 Amsterdam Ave, New York 10027
  (Btw 119th & 120th St)
  (212) 864-2720

- **Panino Sportivo Roma**
  Sandwiches, Coffeehouses, Italian
  1231 Amsterdam Ave, New York 10027
  (Btw 120th & 121st St)
  (212) 662-2066